

Theme 3: Liveability

- Powerhouses/Engines are made up of people and we mustn't lose sight of this.
- Are there real resources and responsibilities behind the NPH/ME? There was some scepticism in our group that there were.
- We have to think carefully about the individual and collective role of councils, business and communities in the initiatives.
- We should be clear about how the NPH/ME interacts (or doesn't) with London and the South East. And to identify the flows of people, goods and services between the NPH/ME and other parts of the UK. And the differences in territorial investment across and within the UK.
- However, the group urged caution when considering whether the NPH/ME were in competition with London. Yes, they compete for public and private investment. But in market terms, London is operating in global markets that are of a different order of magnitude than those which other cities can compete in.
- The NPH/ME is, at present, being driven by transport interventions and schemes – or at least the prospect of them. Specific transport schemes in the north should consider how they will deliver economic, social and environment outcomes.
- This means that there should be new approaches to how infrastructure schemes are appraised on the basis of value and benefits. And for transport this may mean looking beyond congestion time savings.
- The NPH/ME appear to be offering the prospect of place experimentation – i.e. laboratories for testing out concepts and change through decentralisation. However, we should ensure that City Deals, Devo Deals and other deal-making initiatives are broader and more inclusive in terms of the stakeholders and actors directly and indirectly involved and impacted by the initiatives and in terms of the policy areas included in the Deals. For example, the NPH/ME are disproportionately impacted upon by climate change and weather-related events. DEFRA should be part of the decentralisation agenda in a more comprehensive way than at present.
- In summary, are the NPH/ME brands or real strategies. Time will tell. They have to be about liveability and real people and communities. And they have to address the issues that affect communities and citizens first. If there is a finite amount of resource and investment let's sort out intra-city transport (e.g. the Metro) before inter-city region transport (e.g. HS3). We may find that this has more productive and societal benefits.